

Message Text

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DEPT PLEASE PASS TO SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: SREF, US, PO

SUBJ: U.S. ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGUESE REFUGEES FROM ANGOLA

REF: NY TIMES ARTICLE, AUGUST 28; PATTERSON-SCHWARZWALDER TELECON

1. I HAVE THE IMPRESSION FROM ABOVE REFERENCES, PERHAPS ERRONEOUSLY, THAT THERE IS SOME BELIEF IN DEPARTMENT THAT CONTINUED DELAY ON AIRLIFT WILL WORK TO ADVANTAGE OF ANTUNES GROUP BY PUTTING PRESSURE ON COSTA GOMES. WHILE THIS WAS TRUE AT FIRST, AND THE PRESSURE DID HAVE AN EFFECT, THE OPPOSITE IS NOW THE CASE.

2. THE COMMUNIST PRESS, AND THIS INCLUDES MOST OF THE PRESS IN LISBON, HAS DONE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO LINK THE USG TO MELO ANTUNES. THE THRUST OF THE EFFORT (AND THE HEADLINES HERE TONIGHT) IS THAT WE ARE BLACKMAILING COSTA GOMES ON AIRLIFT BECAUSE MELO ANTUNES IS OUR MAN. THE LONGER IT TAKES US TO GET AIRLIFT IN MOTION THE MORE CREDIBLE THESE CHARGES BECOME. ONE IS LINKED TO THE OTHER; BLACKMAIL CHARGES ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUE HURTS US, AND ASSOCIATION OF MELO ANTUNES WITH USG AND BLACKMAIL HURTS HIM.

3. MELO ANTUNES GROUP UNDERSTANDS THIS. THEY TOLD US ON MONDAY THAT THEY WERE PLEASED WITH PRESSURE WE HAD EXERTED, BUT AGREED WE HAD TO MOVE AHEAD. COSTA GOMES FORMAL LETTER REQUESTING AIRLIFT WAS DELIVERED PERSONALLY YESTERDAY BY
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HIS CHIEF OF CABINET FERREIRA DA CUNHA, WHO IS A LEADER OF THE

ANTUNES GROUP. HE URGED WE MOVE AHEAD RAPIDLY. HE WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE, IN COORDINATION WITH THE REST OF THE MELO ANTUNES GROUP FOR TODAY'S PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT CASTIGATING PRESS FOR "INACCURATELY" REPORTING I HAD MET WITH THE NINE.

4. WE HAD NOT REQUESTED SUCH A STATEMENT, AND THE NINE KNOW THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT IS INACCURATE. THEY DID NOT DO IT AS MUCH TO HELP ME, AS TO HELP THEMSELVES BY PUTTING SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM AND USG. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY PERSUADED COSTA GOMES OR DECEIVED HIM, BUT THEIR USE OF THE HIGHEST OFFICE DEMONSTRATES THEIR EXTREME SENSITIVITY TO THE COMMUNIST CHARGES. WE CAN HELP DEFUSE THESE CHARGES BY MOVING AT ONCE TO GET OUR PLANES IN AIR.

5. BASIC DECISION WAS MADE ON AIRLIFT DURING MY CONSULTATIONS AND HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN. I THEREFORE ASSUME THAT OPTIONS BEING DISCUSSED RELATE TO MODALITIES. I HAVE GIVEN MY VIEWS ON THESE, BUT WOULD GLADLY SACRIFICE SOME OF MY PREFERENCES (E.G. FIRST FEW FLIGHTS BY MILITARY AIRCRAFT) IN INTEREST OF AVOIDING BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS.

6. IN VIEW OF ABOVE PLUS INCREASING PROBLEMS IN ANGOLA REQUEST NECESSARY PERSONNEL BE DISPATCHED TO LISBON AND LUANDA AND CONTRACTS CONSUMMATED ASAP WITH EITHER DOD OR CIVILIAN CARRIERS (SEE LISBON 4989).
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